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FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2281  
INFO RUEHEE/ARAB LEAGUE COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
RHEHNSC/WHITE HOUSE WASHDC PRIORITY  
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 2521  
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO PRIORITY 2816  
RHMFISS/USCENTCOM SPECIAL HANDLING MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY  
RHEHAAA/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY  
RHMFISS/HQ USEUCOM VAIHINGEN GE PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 BEIRUT 000907

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR DRL/FO, NEA/FO, NEA/ELA, NEA/PI  
NSC FOR ABRAMS/SINGH/YERGER/GAVITO

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/18/2018  
TAGS: [EAID](#) [KDEM](#) [LE](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#)  
SUBJECT: LEBANON: U.S. NGOS READY TO ASSIST LEBANON WITH  
2009 PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS

Classified By: CDA Michele J. Sison for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

SUMMARY

1. (C) In a June 17 meeting with the Charge, Embassy Beirut's U.S.-based civil society partners on electoral reform presented their plans on their activities leading up to the 2009 parliamentary elections. They will divide the work among them to cover tasks such as providing technical assistance, training, and education to the voters, local civil society representatives, political parties, and election officials. The U.S. partners also plan to include smaller local organizations in their programs in order to develop the capacity of Lebanese NGOs. They are interested in extending USG funding to include the 2010 municipal elections. Partners also mentioned that the EU and UN will be involved in preparing for the elections. All agreed that the time to start is now.

2. (C) The meeting included the Beirut directors of the National Democratic Institute (NDI), International Republican Institute (IRI), and the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES). Also present was the Beirut Director of USAID's Office of Transition Initiatives (TI), Katie Prudhomme, in addition to Emboffs representing USAID and MEPI. End Summary.

VOTER/CIVIL SOCIETY EDUCATION,  
DEVELOPING FEMALE CANDIDATES

3. (C) Joe Hall, resident director of the National Democratic Institute (NDI), said his organization and the leaders from the other U.S. civil society partners for electoral reform in Lebanon met previously to discuss the division of labor in preparation for the 2009 parliamentary elections. Hall said NDI plans to provide coordination and training to domestic election observers. NDI also wants to provide hands-on technical assistance to local civil society organizations that will serve as election observers. Hall added that NDI also plans to continue its work with female politicians in Lebanon on helping them become viable candidates that can compete in 2009. NDI said that the cost of its initiative would be approximately \$3 million.

POLITICAL PARTY  
DEVELOPMENT

¶4. (C) Sean Walsh, Lebanon Country Director for the International Republican Institute (IRI), said IRI plans to conduct three activities during the 2009 elections. It will work with different political parties on development and messaging. Also, IRI will provide research by conducting polls and providing focus group information to political parties. Walsh said IRI ultimately wants to develop a new breed of political party activists and consultants to help their respective parties on messaging and communications. Walsh said IRI would require approximately \$2 million to carry out this mission.

PROVIDING THE GOL  
WITH TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE  
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¶5. (C) Richard Chambers, Beirut Chief of Party from the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES), said his organization plans on working with the GOL's Ministry of Interior (MOI) on providing assistance to election officials. IFES will assist in the development and dissemination of manuals and guidebooks that would define election employees' individual roles and responsibilities while preparing for the elections and, when the time comes, working in the over 5,800 polling stations throughout Lebanon. IFES will also work with the different parliamentary committees involved in drafting a new electoral law. Chambers added that IFES would need approximately \$5.5 million for its program.

BUILDING LOCAL  
ORGANIZATION CAPACITY

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¶6. (C) Hall said part of NDI's plan for supporting the 2009 elections will be to provide technical and financial support to the Lebanese Association for Democratic Election (LADE) and other local NGO's. LADE has been active in electoral reform in Lebanon since 1996. Hall said what LADE needs today is increased technological resources and capabilities, as well as the ability to amass and organize large groups of people to serve as local election observers. NDI will bring in counterparts from around the Middle East region to advise LADE on how to acquire the skills it needs to play a major role in the 2009 elections.

¶7. (C) IRI has worked with the Lebanese Center for Policy Studies (LCPS) and Statistics Lebanon in the past, according to Walsh. LCPS manages IRI's focus group project, while Statistics Lebanon provides polling data that IRI provides to political parties. IRI would most likely work with the same groups during the 2009 elections to help them build their capacity and better develop their skills as an organization before the parliamentary elections occur (Note: Both NDI and IRI have worked with these groups in the past as part of MEPI and DRL funded projects working through the Civil Campaign for Electoral Reform--CCER. End Note.)

2010 MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS  
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¶8. (C) Hall said the donor community should attempt to provide funding for elections assistance to carry through the 2010 municipal elections. Chambers said that the municipal elections would occur, no matter the political impasse that may exist within the larger GOL structure. Hall said the municipal elections will be important because they could serve as a base for the larger parties to choose a new class of candidates to run in the 2013 parliamentary elections.

ADDITIONAL DONOR  
CONTRIBUTIONS  
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¶9. (C) Chambers said the EU was planning to allocate \$14 million towards elections assistance. Chambers added that the EU planned to send an electoral assistance assessment mission to Lebanon early in the fall. Some EU countries may decide to either donate funds into a donor basket or to conduct small scale projects bi-laterally, according to Chambers. The UN will also help by providing technical assistance to the Ministry of Interior.

DON'T WAIT TO LAST MINUTE  
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¶10. (C) Chambers emphasized that preparations must begin now. The elections staff needs to begin training, observers need to be identified and trained and in some instance polling stations may need to have structural repairs completed in order to develop them into feasible sites, he said.

COMMENT  
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¶11. (C) If donors decide to support key projects, such as funding for ballot boxes or financing voter education drives, there must be increased coordination among donor countries. Therefore, Embassy Beirut plans on leading the effort to organize the international donor community to begin joint discussions on what each donor can do to make sure the 2009 elections are free, fair and transparent. The three US partners have collectively determined what each of their individual roles will be in this process and will provide concept papers to post within two weeks to elaborate on their plans.

¶12. (C) Through USAID, we hope to provide a robust assistance package to these institutions that will also assist local partners as well as the Lebanese electorate overall (Note: USAID provided \$1 million dollars in 2005, through the UN's Development Program (UNDP), for parliamentary election

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assistance. End Note.) In addition, DRL and MEPI have both contributed to the larger U.S. partners in the past as well as the smaller local ones such as LADE (through NDI funding), LCPS, and Statistics Lebanon. We hope there may be additional funding available through DRL, WAID/OTI, and MEPI resources. End Comment.  
SISON